



A Customer Service Guide for Independent and Mobile Fishmongers

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General Guide

This will help to explain what flexible training is all about. It will help you to make best use of your flexible training module.

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT FLEXIBLE LEARNING?

Flexible learning gives you the freedom to choose. You study:

- What you like;
- Where you like;
- When you like;
- At a pace to suit you.

You can pick the subjects you want. You don't have to be in a certain classroom at a certain time. You won't be bored because the teaching is too slow, or lost because it's too fast.

You seldom need any qualifications before you are allowed to study.

All this freedom lets you fit your studying into your daily routine.

The best thing about it for most is that they can study without taking valuable time off work.

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR MODULE

What is a module?

A module is the name we have given to a study package.

This module will be divided into segments. You could think of each segment as a lesson. Each segment has a short introduction and a series of aims.

EXERCISES

Within each segment there are a series of exercises for you to complete. These are included to help you with your learning and development. Completion of these exercises will assist you in gaining confidence.

Upon successful completion of the exercises, you should sign and date in the space provided. This will act as evidence that you have read through the segments and completed the exercises.

HINTS ON STUDYING

When?

Try to get into a regular study routine. Set aside times for study but be ready to give and take a bit. Miss one of your planned sessions if you must, but try to make it up later.

Set yourself realistic targets such as 'I will finish segments one and two by this weekend'

and stick to them!

Grab the chance to study at odd moments. You'll be amazed how much you can learn in fifteen minutes. It's difficult for the average person to really concentrate for more than twenty minutes at a time anyway. A word of warning – don't think you can learn anywhere. You need to be able to concentrate; there are often distractions which prevent this.

How?

- Time spent just reading a module is not the same as time spent learning.
- You must become involved, the best learning happens when you're active, e.g. completing the exercises and making notes.
- Don't study for too long without a break.

This module will remind you of suitable places to stop for a while, but if you need a break earlier, take one. It's entirely up to you.

Where?

Try to find somewhere where you will not be distracted. Almost anywhere will do. It all depends on how you are placed at home and at work. Don't forget your local library.

The secret is, **be flexible**. All you need is somewhere where you can get on with it and not be disturbed.

Carry your module with you when you can. Try to find gaps in your normal routine when you could do some useful work.

Now that you've decided to have a go, **stick with it!** Don't give up. Most people find studying hard at times, this is quite natural. It is also quite natural to need help with parts that you find especially difficult. Don't be afraid to ask for help. I'm sure that you'll find it worthwhile.

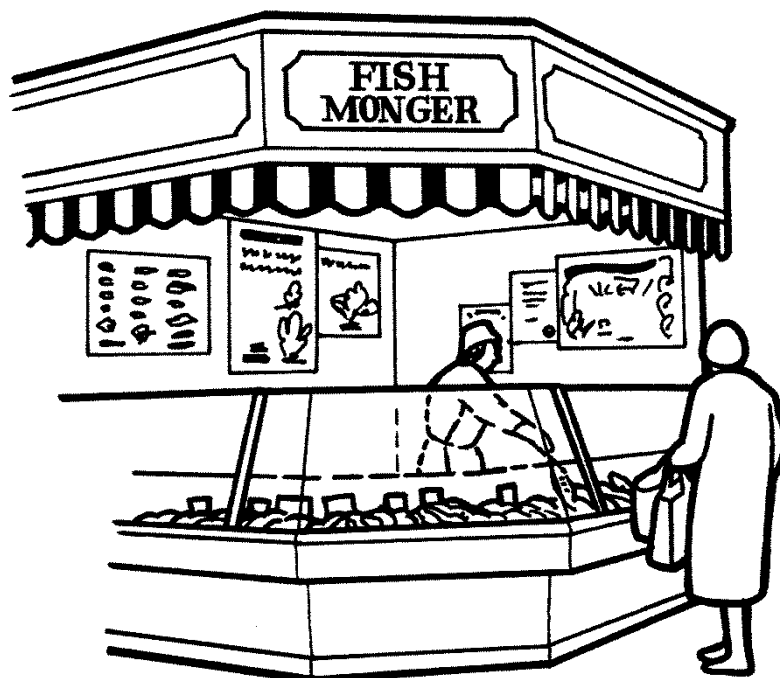
Introduction

“Customer service is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase. The perception of success of such interactions is dependent on employees who can adjust themselves to the personality of the guest.”

In customer service, it is important to realise that customers have expectations from the moment they contact or visit an organisation or company they want to do business with. Remember that good customer service is a big tool in the success of your business.

Your customer will make almost instant judgements and form impressions about you and your organisation the first time they come into contact with you.

This workbook is to support individuals working within independent fishmongers or mobile fishmonger businesses. It will help increase your knowledge and understanding of customer service and help give you the skills you require, to improve your customer service.



Segment One – People Skills

INTRODUCTION

In this first segment, we are going to look at people skills and how your contact with your customers can make them feel special. Some people are naturally good with customers, but this doesn't mean that you cannot achieve their standards by learning various new skills.

Portraying a positive image to your work colleagues and customers, so they feel better about their experiences both as employees and customers of your company is a key part of your job. Teamwork is also important in achieving consistently good customer service.

AIMS OF THE SEGMENT

After studying this segment you will be able to:

- Explain what factors contribute to presenting a positive image;
- Understand the two choices you have regarding how you behave towards customers; and
- State what your customers expect from you and how you can contribute towards delivering exceptional customer service.

Presenting a positive image

A very important aspect of your role is to make your customers feel comfortable and welcome as soon as they meet you. At these times you should be asking yourself:

- What does my customer want and expect?
- What can I do to provide that little more than they expect?
- How can I make sure that customers end any contact feeling good about their experience, good about me and good about my company or organisation?

“No one moment is more important than your customer’s first contact with YOU!”

Exercise one

You need to recognise that the impression created by you is more than just the way you are dressed. It is about your behaviour too. What sort of situation makes you feel grumpy in the morning? One example has been provided. Can you list another three in the table below?

Getting up late
Candidate’s signature and date

You have two choices: - Behave how you feel or be professional in your approach and put your feelings aside. The second option is not always easy, but if you don’t do this your feelings will be reflected in your behaviour with your customers. If you act in a grumpy or off hand manner, it’s very likely your customers will respond in the same way and not return or give poor feedback about your business to others.

Exercise two

How can we control our feelings? Below is one example for you. Can you list another three?

Count to ten
Candidate’s signature and date

In order to appear professional always, to your customers, you need to be a bit like an iceberg. The part of an iceberg that you can see above the surface of the ocean only represents one third of its whole, two thirds of it is out of sight below the water. Our feelings, moods and attitudes should be the same and remain unseen below the surface, only our behaviour, which is controlled, is on display.

Customers and their expectations

Exercise three

Answer the questions below and discuss your answers with your employer.

Why do you and your business need customers?	
What do customers expect from: Your company? You and your colleagues? Your products and services?	
Why should you give exceptional service to your customers?	
How do you give exceptional customer service?	
What are the benefits of exceptional customer service to: Your customers? You? Your business?	
Candidate's signature and date	

Segment 2 – Putting Your People Skills into Practice

INTRODUCTION

Using your skills to serve your customers correctly is a key aspect of your job role. In this segment, we are going to look at how you can practice some of these skills in your daily routine.

We will also look at how you can meet your customers' expectations on a daily basis along with the skills and techniques that you can use to satisfy your customers.

AIMS OF THE SEGMENT

When you have completed this section you'll be able to:

- List the basic needs and expectations of your customers;
- Understand how your body language impacts on the service that you offer;
- State how remembering a customer name can enhance their shopping experience; and
- Outline the key points which will help you achieve a high standard of service when serving customers.

Meeting customer expectations

On a daily basis you need to ensure that your customers' expectations are consistently met and every opportunity is taken to make their shopping experience special every time.

All of your customers have some basic needs and expectations that must be fulfilled. These are:

- Attentive staff ready to provide service, help and advice;
- Greeting;
- Positive body language;
- Use of names (if regular customers);
- Tone of voice;
- Service skills;
- Farewell.

Your customer wants to feel important and wants you to be ready to serve them as soon as they make contact with your company. You should be organised, and everything should be ready so when your customer requests your help you can give them your full attention.

Consider the types of things that prevent you from being ready to look after your customers. For instance not having the correct paperwork, catalogues or information, not having a pen to take down orders or notes, not knowing who to put your customer through to if they telephone and ask for information you cannot give them (if working in a shop) or not having cutlery or service items ready if they ask for something to eat if you are sampling products.

Exercise one

Remember when greeting your customers each one is different and you need to change your greeting accordingly, to meet their requirements.

Record a greeting that you have used for the following types of people. There is an example for the first type of person listed.

Type of Person	Greeting style
An elderly well-groomed person	Good morning sir/madam, how can I help you?
A young student	
A regular customer	
An impatient customer	
An elderly confused person	
A person with a hearing disability	
Candidate's signature and date	

Remember if you are meeting your customers face to face greet them with a genuine smile and make eye contact. Don't wait to be spoken to, speak to your customer first.

Body language includes your posture, your facial expressions, and your hand gestures. The ability to understand and to interpret body language can help you. You can also use it in a positive way to add strength to your verbal messages. Your customers can read your moods, and this affects how they feel and behave. So, your behaviour and body language needs to be positive and professional at all times. Customers get their impressions of us from our tone of voice, body language and what we say.

Which person represents the type of employee that you want working with you?



Exercise two

Listed below are some do's and don'ts concerning body language. Identify why each one is important. There is one example to start you off. Discuss your answers with your employer or a friend if you work alone.

Body language do's

Do	Why
Make full eye contact with the customer	It indicates that you are paying attention to the customer
Always smile	
Give the customer enough space	
Nod your head in agreement	
Always face your customer	
Candidate's signature and date	

Body language don'ts

Don't	Why
Lean or slouch on the counter	This creates the impression that you are not interested in the customer and want to be somewhere else.
Fold your arms	
Standing too close to the customer	
Hands in your pockets	
Muttering under your breathe	
Fidgeting while the customer is talking	
Candidate's signature and date	

The use of names

Your customers like to feel important, and one way you can make them feel like this is to remember their names. They will appreciate it even more if you can recall something individual to them, such as they have just returned from holiday, or a special family event like a wedding or christening. Obviously, you will not be able to remember everyone but when a customer's name becomes known to you make a note so you can use it next time.

Exercise three

What tone of voice would you use for the following people? Complete the following task and discuss your answers with your employer or a friend. Discuss ways of how you can improve how you talk to your customers.

Type of Person	Tone of Voice
An elderly confused person	Slow, patient tone. But not patronising!
Cheerful/friendly	
Negative/grumpy	
Impatient	
Demanding/angry	
Candidate's signature and date	

Being helpful

Throughout this workbook we have stressed how important it is to do that little bit extra for your customers whenever you get the opportunity. This will turn good customer service into excellent customer service. Always remember to ask your customers 'Is there anything I can help you with?'

Service standards

To provide excellent customer service you need to achieve certain service standards. This helps you to ensure your customer's expectations are met every time. The list below outlines points that you can consider when serving your customers.

- Greeting
- Gather information and confirm
- Suggest the product or service you think suits your customer's needs
- Confirm your customer understands your suggestion
- Suggest any additional products or services (if appropriate)
- Confirm your customer understands again
- Confirm price, delivery method and date (if applicable)
- Request your customer's signature, address, confirmation and delivery arrangements (if applicable)
- Confirm all above details again
- Check that all the parts of your customer's order are available
- Anything else?
- Process payment and details

Segment Three – First Impressions

INTRODUCTION

First impressions are very important. The first time customers see you and your business will create a lasting impression upon them. We will consider how you can contribute towards portraying a professional image along with some the reasons why this is important.

In this segment we will examine some of the different techniques that can be used to make a good first impression on your customers, how to improve first impressions and maintain the highest standards.

AIMS OF THE SEGMENT

By the end of this segment you'll be able to:

- Understand the importance of making a good first impression;
- Describe some of the factors that contribute towards making a customer feel welcome at your business;
- State the four P's of customer service; and
- Know that your appearance is crucial towards producing a positive first impression.



Getting it right first time

In customer service, it is important to realise that customers have expectations from the moment they contact or visit a company they want to do business with. Your customer will make almost instant judgements and form impressions about you and your organisation the first time they come into contact with you. These opinions will stay with them and will often affect how they ultimately feel about the business they do with you and the products or services they buy. We are going to look at ways of ensuring those first few seconds create the right impact on your customer. Once again you will be asked to think like a customer and consider how they feel when they first make contact with you, your colleagues (if applicable) and the company you work for. You are also going to be asked to think about the impression your competitors might make on the same customers.

Exercise one

Put yourself in your customers' shoes. Now think about what happens in your shop or mobile business. How do you treat your customers? Do you think they feel welcome? Consider now how a customer might score the business you work for, think like a customer and score as honestly as you can each aspect below.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Entrance to shop or area around mobile van Clean, tidy and free from obstruction				
Shop floor (for shops only) Clean, tidy and free from obstruction				
Availability of products				
Products clearly priced				
Staff greeting: make eye contact and smile				
Availability of staff				
Appearance of staff: name badge and uniform				
Staff response to a request or query				
Friendliness and enthusiasm of staff				
Staff saying goodbye/anything else today?				
Your overall impression				
Candidate's signature and date				

First impressions survey

Based upon your findings from exercise one in this segment, how did you think your business compared with the customer service expected by your customers? What did you do best and what could you do better?

Think about all of these things as you write your summary below. List your suggestions for change and improvements and discuss them with your colleagues, if applicable, or a friend.

Exercise two

First Impression	Findings	Solution/Improvements
What would be your customer's first impression of your business?		
What did you or your colleagues do best in your business?		
What were the displays like in your business?		
What appearance did you or your team display to your customers?		
What services did you or your team offer your customers?		
Candidate's signature and date		

The Four P's – Products, Presentation, Practices, People

The checklists you have completed can be used to judge first impressions in several different aspects of customer service. These can be summarised as:

- **Products;**
- **Presentation;**
- **Practices;**
- **People Skills.**

How you treat your customers is an important part of your employer's business or your own business. You might be the only person who the customer talks to during their visit to your workplace, especially if you're a mobile fishmonger, so make sure that you create a **good impression**.

I don't know about you, but I shop where the staff are polite to me. The goods may be cheaper down the road, but if the staff are rude or I feel in the way I won't go in there again. **This makes the person who sold me the goods a very important person!**

Your appearance

You might think that your appearance doesn't have any impact on whether people buy seafood from your workplace. However, this does have some influence on where people buy their seafood from. Your **appearance is very important** to customers and therefore the trade levels in your shop or at your van. The way that you dress along with your personal appearance will affect customer's first impressions of your shop or mobile fish van.

Exercise three

Answer the following questions.

Give an example of how you greet your customers.
What is your company procedure for communicating with your customers?
How do you give your customers a positive impression of yourself?
What do you do when a customer asks for information on a product or service you don't offer?
Give an example of when a customer expectation has not been met; how did you respond?
Candidate's signature and date

Segment Four – Caring for Customers

INTRODUCTION

In this section we will be looking at what you can do to care for your customers and make their shopping experience a memorable one. What ways are best for caring for your customers?

You have an important role to play and producing a good lasting impression is as vital as making a strong first impression (highlighted in the last segment). Occasionally, you may have to go above and beyond your normal standards, in order to create a positive shopping experience from what could potentially be a negative incident.

AIMS OF THE SEGMENT

After studying this segment you will be able to:

- Explain why your role is important, both in and out of work;
- Highlight why lasting impressions are as critical as first impressions; and
- Understand that on some occasions you have to go above and beyond your normal level of service.



The role you play

You are working in a service industry where you meet customers every day. Each encounter with your customers is important to you and the business you work for. With each of your customers, you are involved in welcoming them, dealing with their needs and saying goodbye. If you can get on well with your customers and develop a good working relationship, it will make your job more enjoyable.

When you work in a service industry you have two roles; not only are you a member of the team dealing with customers, but often, when you are not at work, you are a customer too. As a customer you realise the importance of staff being pleasant and that the service a customer receives influences their opinion of the customer service team and the business it represents.

Exercise one

Complete the following questions regarding after sales service and discuss your answers, with your employer or a friend.

Why is important to follow up the provision of products or services delivered by you and your colleagues to your customers?
What different methods do you use to check that your customers are happy with the products or services they have received from your company?
What after sales services are provided by your company?
What other after sales service do you think your organisation should provide? How should this service be implemented?
Candidate's signature and date

The procedures outlined above are very simple and if followed will ensure your customers receive quality service every time.

Lasting impressions

It is not enough to make a good first impression; your customers must leave feeling good as well. She or he will remember their last few minutes or even seconds with you, so it is important to get it right. You must be polite towards your customers when you bid them farewell. Also, is the shop entrance/exit clean, tidy and free from obstacles? Or is the area around your van tidy? How often do you check that there is no litter outside the front of your shop or around your mobile unit? A customer may have purchased what they wanted and served by a helpful staff member. However, if the exterior of the shop or mobile van is scruffy and untidy, the customer may think twice about returning to your business.

Exercise two

What can you do or say to make your customers last impression a good one?

Here are two examples. Can you think of four more?

Are you happy with everything?
We look forward to seeing you again soon.
Candidate's signature and date

Once again make that extra effort to speak to or acknowledge your customers as they end their shopping experience at the business that you work for.

Going above and beyond!

In some circumstances you might be required to go above and beyond the usual high standards of customer service that you deliver. It may be because the levels of trade have been extremely busy and an item has been forgotten from a customer's order. Alternatively, because you have been so busy in the shop or at your van, you've sold out of several species. In each of these examples, it may mean that you have to do something a little bit special to turn a potentially negative situation into a positive one. In the first example, if you've forgotten an item off a customer's telephone order, you could call them back and organise to deliver that particular item free of charge, maybe at the end of your shift? In the second situation, you could offer a similar species of seafood at a slightly reduced cost or maybe you could sell them another item at a slightly reduced cost (with the permission from your manager).

Exercise three

State two ways when you have gone above and beyond to deliver exceptional service to your customers.

Candidate's signature and date

Segment Five – Complaints Handling

INTRODUCTION

Dealing with customer complaints isn't easy, especially if you wish to maintain good levels of customer service. Identifying when a customer is not happy and looking out for the signs that they are not happy is a subtle skill that you can develop.

Handling a customer complaint and turning it into a positive situation is a very useful skill to develop and utilise. Using the correct techniques to resolve the complaint and satisfying the customer's needs is vital to maintaining the reputation of the business where you work.

AIMS OF THE SEGMENT

When you have completed this section you'll be able to:

- Understand that not all unhappy customers complain;
- State some of the signs that customers aren't happy;
- Describe how you can resolve a complaint in a professional manner; and
- List the seven steps for handling complaints.

Don't assume all unhappy customers complain

We tend to think that if there are no complaints that everything is okay and all our customers are satisfied with the service they are receiving. If you think back to the first segment, you will remember we stated that some unhappy customers don't bother to complain; instead they vote with their feet and don't come back. Therefore, it is better to have complaints rather than silent dissatisfaction because it provides us with a second opportunity to get things right.

You need to ensure that you make the most of this second chance so in this segment we are going to look at handling complaints positively so that customers return. Before we look at complaint handling it is useful to perhaps consider why people complain in the first place and how we could avoid many of these complaints.

In many instances you can do something to avoid potential complaints, certainly by staying in contact with your customers. By listening, questioning and observing, you may be able to step in and prevent dissatisfaction.

Exercise one

What signs can you look for that will identify that a customer has a problem and may need help?

Here are two examples. Can you list another four?

Facial expression, for example, angry or annoyed
Customer wandering backwards and forwards
Candidate's signature and date

Handling complaints

There may be times when you cannot prevent a complaint so you need to be aware of how best to handle complaints so you can turn them to your advantage. It is important to remember when dealing with complaints to **not take it personally and to deal with the situation in a professional manner**. Try to focus on the problem, not the person.

What you might be thinking

He/she can't talk to me like that.
It's not my fault.

Think instead

What can I do about this problem?
I have to find a way to make it better.

Exercise two

Think of a time when you have been faced with a difficult situation/complaint and you took it personally. Write down your answers below.

What was the situation?
How did you react?
How did it end?
How could you have handled it better?
How might you have felt afterwards?
Candidate's signature and date

Remember it is important to react positively as your feelings will be transferred to your customer.

Seven steps to handling complaints

1. Approach the customer and offer help.
2. Listen to the complaint; let your customer talk.
3. Question to check you understand the problem and find out what your customer wants.
4. Act to resolve the problem.
5. Inform your customer about what you are going to do or inform your manager, if necessary.
6. Thank your customer for bringing it to your attention and giving you the chance to put things right.
7. Check the problem has been resolved and it won't happen again.

Exercise three

Over the next couple of weeks keep a record of any customer complaints, problems or queries that you have to deal with.

Question	Description
What was the nature of the complaint, problem or query?	
How did you deal with the complaint?	
Who else was involved in dealing with the complaint?	
How did your customer react?	
How did you feel after the incident?	
Candidate's signature and date	

Always remember that it is better to have a complaint, than have silent dissatisfaction. At least complaints will help you to provide that second chance to put things right, with your customers.

Remember that “a customer who is talking is better than one who is walking.”

Segment Six - Selling Skills

INTRODUCTION

This final segment will look at the best techniques to use to successfully sell products to the customers and how to establish what the customer's needs are.

There are different techniques used to approach your customers and establish what they want and where possible up sell to the customer. Using the correct questioning techniques also help to identify the needs of the customers.

AIMS OF THE SEGMENT

By the end of this segment you'll be able to:

- Outline the key points to selling;
- Understand the types of question that you can use in a sales environment; and
- Describe the techniques that can be used to close a sale successfully.

The art of selling

You need to show that you can establish customers' requirements, select the appropriate products and offer alternatives where customers' needs cannot be met. You must demonstrate an understanding of the principles of food handling and packaging to ensure its quality and safety and you must be able to politely and securely process the sale of products.

Your attitude to the customer reflects your company. You need to be able to listen and interpret the wishes of a customer. You also need to show that you can conduct the sale courteously, and at a pace which is appropriate to the needs of the customer and the trading conditions.

In a retail context, there are two types of selling. First there is accepting payment from a customer who has already decided exactly what they want to buy. Secondly, there is persuading a customer to purchase something that they haven't already made up their mind to buy. It is in this second situation that the five steps of the selling model are used.

1. Acknowledge and approach
2. Identify the customer's needs
3. Questioning
 - present solutions that satisfy
 - features and benefits
4. Overcome objections and check
 - commitment to buy
 - open and closed questions
 - offering solutions and alternatives
5. Close the sale

Exercise one

Answer the following questions.

Why is it important to find out exactly what food products the customer wants in terms of quantity, type, quality and price range?
--

Why is it important to provide suitable alternatives when the customer's first choice can't be met?

How would you react if a customer changes their mind regarding their choice of product?

How would you advise a customer to transport and store their purchase?
--

Why is it important to confirm the weight and price of the goods to the customer?

Candidate's signature and date

Types of question

In some situations you will need to use **open questions** so that you gain a wide range of information. In other instances you will require a specific answer to clarify a situation and will therefore use a **closed question**.

Open questions begin with the words **why, what** or **how** and encourage people to talk. Open questions can also start with the words **when, where, who** or **which** and obtain a slightly more specific answer. For example, what are you looking to do with the fish today? Or, what ingredients are you considering to add to the fish?

Closed questions commence with words including **can, do, will** and **would**. A good sales person will use a closed question to control a talkative customer and bring to a conclusion a line of questioning. For example, is there a special fish that you are looking for today? Or, do you have a budget to work to?

Experienced staff will use an open question first, to gain an expanded response then follow this up with a closed question to seek confirmation of a customer's understanding. This is sometimes referred to as the **funnel approach** to questioning whereby the staff member encourages a full response initially with an open question then seeks clarification with a closed question which gains a specific yes or no answer or a one word answer.



Exercise two

A customer wants some fish for a special meal, but they are unsure of what they want and how to use it. Make a list of open questions that you could ask the customer so that you gain the most information from them.

Candidate's signature and date

Closing the sale

Closing the sales means agreeing with the customer what is needed and how much the goods and services are going to cost. Then you need to confirm the type of payment method to be used. There are a large number of techniques available for closing the sale.

The three most common **closing the sale** techniques are;

1. The **assumptive** close, where you say, 'I'll just ring this up for you' and the customer has to stop you if they are not buying.
2. The **decision** close, where you ask 'Would you like anything else?'
3. The **straightforward** close, where you ask the customer if the product is what they are looking for. If the answer is 'yes', you have made a sale. If the answer is 'no', you need to find out what the customer wants.

Some people say that if you treat your customers how you wish to be treated when you are shopping, you won't go far wrong!

Congratulations! You have now reached the end of the Customer Service Guide for Independent and Mobile Fishmongers.